

# Visa information system VIS: establishment, information exchange between Member States

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This is a progress report on work carried out by the Commission in 2006 on the development of the Visa Information System (VIS). It is the third such report presented by the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament in accordance with Article 6 of Council Decision No 2004/512/EC on the development of the VIS.

## Progress during the period under review:

- 2006 saw the conclusion of Phase 1 “Detailed Design” of the VIS project and the beginning of Phase 2 “Development, Testing and Deployment”.
- The “Bio-metric Matching System” (BMS) call for tender was completed and a contract awarded to a consortium led by Accenture and SAGEM.
- It was not possible, in 2006, to complete development of the central system due to ongoing negotiations in the co-decision procedure on the VIS Regulation.
- The main development contractor produced the following: An Interface Control Document (ICD) which describes how Member States can connect to, and use, the VIS; three security deliverables (protection Profile, Security Plan and Risk Analysis); version 2.3 of the Training, helpdesk and Support Plan; the Migration and Integration Plan; and Detailed Specifications (DTS), that describe the technical and functional details of the central system.
- Various technical difficulties have prevented the Central Unit in Strasbourg from opening on time, which in turn has prevented VIS from becoming fully operational. Problems relate mostly to the air conditioning system and to an insufficiency in the power supply to the site. The installation of the VIS Central Unit is now expected to take place in late 2007. Works on the site in St Johan in Austria for hosting the Back-up Central Unit (BCU) were completed in November and covered the computer room adaptation for SIS II. The VIS BCU should be installed at around the same time as the Central Unit in Strasbourg in 2007.
- A contract for a wide area communications network between the National Interface in each Member State and the Central VIS was awarded in mid-2006 and signed in September. The specific contract is foreseen for mid-2007, with testing of the network being made by the third quarter. The s-Testra delay introduced a minimum nine-month delay into the VIS project.
- National progress varies between the Member States, with some being more advanced in their projects than others. A new reporting template on progress has been devised for the Member States with new target dates for key milestones. By the end of 2006 nearly two-third of the information that Member States need to report had not been forwarded to the Commission. Most of the Member States, however, report that they could be ready to meet the new target dates.
- Both the Belgian and the French administrations have begun work on rolling-out BIODEV, the purpose of which is to capture, store and verify bio-metric data from visa applicants. Initial findings on BIODEV were presented to the Member States in the course of 2006. Additional findings are to be announced in mid-2007.

- The project is currently within the original budget forecast. Budget commitment appropriations for VIS for the next reporting period, amounts to EUR 32 million, of which payment appropriations will be EUR 20 million.
- In 2006, five one-day combined National Project Manager and Working Group meetings; four one-day National Project Managers' meetings and six one-day Working Group meetings were held. In addition, a seminar on VIS was held in July to present a project overview to future Schengen Member States: Switzerland, Romania and Bulgaria.

**Conclusions:**

- 2006 was marked by steady progress toward the successful completion of the design phase. Member State/EU communication remained excellent and relationships were strengthened within the working group meetings.
- In 2007, priority will be given to the central project and progress toward the development and deployment phases.
- The delay which has materialised (thanks in large part to the failure to adopt the VIS Regulation on time) will require a rescheduling of the entire project.